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BEAUFORT SEA ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PANEL:
RESOLUTE HEARINGS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONCERNS

Brief submitted by the
Archaeological Survey of Canada
National Museum of Man

October 1983

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1. INTRODUCTION

Our purpose in this brief can be summarized as follows:

- to briefly review the Archaeological Survey of Canada, National Museum of Man (ASC/NMM) present position and role with respect to archaeological research and management in areas of federal jurisdiction;
- to present the panel and all interested parties with a survey of the archaeological heritage situation as it pertains to the Resolute area of interest defined in the "Beaufort Sea Environmental Assessment Panel - Pre-session conference proceedings";
- finally, to outline some of the measures that are being envisioned in order to rationalize and make more effective the protection of archaeological resources in the context of the proposed Beaufort Sea Project, with special reference to the area under present consideration.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION: SUMMARIZING SOME PRINCIPLES

In keeping with earlier statements presented to the Panel, namely the position paper entitled "Beaufort Sea Project - Position Statement on Heritage Matters: prehistoric and protohistoric archaeology", and the ASC/NMM brief entitled "Beaufort Sea Project - Environmental Impact Statement: A Critical Review of the 'Heritage Resources' issue", we would first like to reiterate and emphasize a number of principles and points of information.

Because of its mandate, and because of its expertise in the field of boreal and arctic archaeological research and management, the ASC/NMM has been, in the course of the last few years, confronted with increasingly complex rescue or urgent archaeology issues resulting from short, medium and long term development plans on the part of both private and government sectors. Its continuing and growing involvement in such matters has resulted in it becoming the principal federal researcher, manager and advocate in matters of archaeological heritage in Canadian lands, exclusive of National Parks. Such a situation, coupled with pressures from other agencies, has led to a recent cabinet decision directing the ASC/NMM to begin work on the development of a policy that will deal with matters of archaeological research and management in lands under federal jurisdiction, and with special emphasis on north of 60°.

While a formal statement or status report on this important activity has yet to be made available - it is expected shortly - it is possible at this time, and in the present context to discuss or describe some of the most important considerations that have to be dealt with if we are to develop and implement a rational, coherent approach in the field of archaeological research and management.

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As stated more extensively below (see: 3) and elsewhere, archaeological remains represent a known and potential source of knowledge without which our perception and understanding of northern lands' and peoples' history would be very spotty indeed. These heritage resources are finite, non-renewable and must be properly protected from the onslaught of a variety of attritional factors such as coastal erosion and accelerating development.

It should also be made clear that the historical value of such remains is very much contingent upon their being gathered or recorded, according to various methods and techniques that have been designed by the archaeological discipline in order to maximize contextual information return. In most cases such can only be achieved through a range of integrated, inter-disciplinary approaches which means that in most situations what is called archaeological evidence consists of more than archaeological objects themselves.

Also very important is the fact that these resources are useful only when they are taken through the steps of analysis, interpretation and dissemination, the latter being essential for scientific feedback and being directed, in one form or another (displays, publications, etc.) at both public and scientific audiences.

Finally, subsumed under this critical path that leads from archaeological remains in the ground, seen as part of the environment, to excavated archaeological remains that can be used as readable historical documents, is a complex management infrastructure. Such is essential to ensure the application of proper archaeological procedures at all levels of this study process.

3. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE: NORTHWEST PASSAGE/PARRY CHANNEL AREA

The archaeological resource of northern Canada includes evidence of American Indian occupation of the region since at least the end of the last ice-age, approximately 12,000 years ago. The Arctic coast and archipelago bears evidence of approximately 4000 years of Inuit and pre-Inuit occupation and adaptation. It seems likely that the Greenlandic Norse made at least occasional forays into the eastern Canadian Arctic, and left archaeological traces of this first European discovery of the New World. European Arctic exploration of the past 400 years can be traced archaeologically at sites such as Kodlunarn Island (Frobisher's mine), and Beechey and Dealy islands (Franklin and Franklin search expedition encampments) in Parry Channel. For the Inuit and northern Indian peoples, archaeology forms the major source of information on the development of their traditional ways of life. Native interest in their archaeological heritage, and in its management, is considerable.

The combination of cold Arctic climate and isostatically rebounding coasts, which in most regions have protected archaeological sites from coastal erosion, have in Arctic Canada, resulted in a state of

preservation of archaeological materials which is practically unmatched elsewhere in the world. Although relatively secure from natural processes of erosion and decomposition, the excellent state of preservation combined with the fact that most arctic archaeological sites are not hidden by heavy vegetation growth or overburden, makes these sites extremely vulnerable to disturbance by human agencies. Not only the actual construction activity involved in development projects, but the collecting activities of personnel involved in such projects, pose major hazards to Arctic archaeological sites, the majority of which are relatively small, visible, and easily disturbed or destroyed.

Archaeological sites form a finite and non-renewable resource yielding not only evidence of past human activity but of past environments. Each site is unique, in that archaeology cannot usefully sample a population and sacrifice the rest to erosion or other disturbance. From past experience, we can assume that any increase in human activity in the vicinity of an archaeological site will result in some degree of degradation of the information which that site can produce on the past.

With specific reference to the northern tanker route, archaeological concerns focus on construction and associated activity at land-based support facilities (terminals, navigational aids, airstrips etc.). Our current knowledge of the archaeology of Parry Channel and adjacent regions is very poor. Systematic surveys of archaeological resources have covered only small portions of the region, and less than a dozen single-season operations have been devoted to the excavation of archaeological sites along these coasts. From this base of knowledge, it is clear that we can only inadequately assess the effects of development activity on this region of potentially high archaeological interest.

4. BEAUFORT SEA PROJECT: OUTLINE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS:

In our critical review of the proponents EIS documentation, presented to the Panel in February, 1983, we concluded with a single recommendation to the effect that "the proponent should be required to re-appraise their position(s) and approach(es) vis-à-vis Heritage issues, and to participate in the formulation and implementation of a long-term, integrated B.S.P. archaeological mitigation programme, through extensive consultation and collaboration with the Territorial and Federal agencies responsible for Heritage research and management in the areas under consideration".

We are pleased to report to the Panel that contacts directed towards a common resolution of the problem at hand, have recently been initiated by representatives of at least two of the main proponent, i.e. Esso and Gulf. It appears from these preliminary discussions and from further contacts in these matters with the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Center that there should be no major problems on developing a B.S.P.-related archaeological mitigation approach that would meet the principles enunciated earlier and that would satisfy all concerned parties.

Most important in the present context, is to take advantage of the lead time available in order to develop all the necessary facets of an integrated research and management programme designed to deal with short, medium and long term issues.

The former, for example, may include various urgent archaeological requirements that can be identified in the context of some of the ongoing exploratory work being carried out by the proponents. It is our feeling that such situations, albeit not of major concern here, should be considered as an integral part of any efficient archaeological research and management programme. In fact, dealing effectively with such issues could well provide us with the means - test cases - to formulate a best fit approach in the framework of the larger development proposal.

In a longer term perspective, we will need to place emphasis on the development of a referral system specifically oriented towards archaeological heritage needs, on the development of the necessary management and operational procedures, on the establishment of flexible schedules, and on the identification of funding mechanisms. Finally, we will also need to design an approach that will ensure the participation of all concerned parties.

As must be obvious from the above, much of the responsibility for the formulation and implementation of such a programme lies with the federal and territorial agencies responsible for archaeological research and management, and we wish to assure the Panel that they have agreed to work on this together. The success of the approach also hinges very much upon the willingness on the part of the proponents to recognize the importance of the issue at hand, and to facilitate by all reasonable means at their disposal the implementation of measures that will serve to salvage, protect, interpret and disseminate a wealth of information on the prehistory and history of Canada's northern lands.

As noted above, preliminary discussions on this archaeological heritage issue have just begun. We would, respectfully, request from the panel permission to make use of its Hearings schedule in order to present it with a series of progress reports. Thus, at the next - Inuvik - meeting, we would hope to be in a position to outline in much more detail, the nature and extent of our plans. And so on until the Ottawa session, where we should be able to present the Panel with the details of an implementable Beaufort Sea archaeological research and management programme.

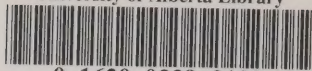
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